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From a Field Letter

Perhaps Pentecost, the day of the descent of the holy ghost, is the appropriate day for an answer to your letter of Easter. The teachings of Pentecost are indeed full of mighty symbolic content, but there was already an earlier saga whose wisdom seems to me to be no less. According to it the hearts' flame – or that holy ghost – that alone elevates man above the animals, was once robbed from the gods by a Titan, Prometheus. Note well: robbed, because the gods did want to give this most direct component of their being to any other of their creatures out of mercy, rather because it was only supposed to be go to the best, the most daring and strongest, the victor in the struggle for existence who dared the most incredible, to penetrate into the divine regions by his own strength, to accomplish the decisive deed of mankind and to sacrifice himself for this deed for its own sake. Thereby he would win man's right to be the carrier of the divine flame on earth.

Where is the essential difference between this and that fable? It is always that same schism that runs like a red thread through the history of Germanic Christianity and made out of us the folk of eternal seekers, doubters, fighters and "protestants".

For this is the main pillar of Christian teachings, with which it stands or falls through all reforms and interpretations. They declare love to be the sole and innermost law of "genuine" life, thus a concept which is diametrically opposed to the one dominating earthly life, which is called the "struggle for existence" and the victory of the stronger over the weaker. Indeed, we also find here another, earthly love, but it is not the dominant center of existence, rather only the female opposite of manly struggle.

Since it is obvious that life on earth does not follow the creator's Christian basic law, logically "genuine" life must be moved to the beyond, and earthly life must be valued as a hollow image, a valley of woe, full of original sin, short, merely a transitional, preparatory phase for actual being. Christianity must hence, in accordance with its intellectual structure, always be other-worldly and basically life-rejecting, and no interpretation, no sophistry are able to solve this contradiction that exists between the revealed will of God and the actual being of his entire creation, starting with the struggle of gravitational forces in space down to the pitiless, consequential and gapless process of selection in the natural world. All of our folk's religious thinkers from Meister Ekkehard to Lagarde have struggled with this contradiction.

We have now entered an epoch in which this contraction becomes especially crassly apparent due to the escalating intensity of this struggle for existence, in which we as Europeans – that means as the prerequisite for any occidental religion – will only survive, if we affirm this struggle for existence as the genuine meaning of life and not as earthly imperfection. Otherwise we must in the long run succumb against beings for whom – lacking any spiritual problematics – it is the only conceivable form of existence.

What is defended here in the east, is after all far more than this or that religious conviction and also more then the cross of Golgatha. Here it is about the human itself,

about that holy flame that, stemming from a divine source, since the time of Prometheus has first created the difference between man and animal, and we must today protect it from the reach of a race in whose heart it has gone out.

I do not know whether one can put that which happens and will yet happen in the course of this struggle under a Christian commandment. At any rate, 1 could not and can do so even less today. For it is about more than this, whether one can with sophistry of interpretation and generosity of view still somehow remain a Christian or not. It is about our life again being based on an obligating, religious center, that religion does not just mean a traditional habit or cult construction, rather innermost, necessary main spring for each act, for life itself.

In the Middle Ages Christianity was such a center and perhaps still in the age of the reformation. It was simultaneously life's core and main spring, even if the reformation, as a result of humanism and renaissance, meant a first, suspecting rebellion against a never completely comprehended world-image. As this center was lost more and more in more recent times, it coincided with a conspicuous decline of our artistic creative energy, with a growing insecurity toward the basic questions of life and with a dangerous weakening of our physical life-will, in short, with a general deformation of the German soul and German man.

To win back a religious center as a genuine, active center, hence happens as an unconditional life necessity. This so much the more so as we enter an era where we must defend our physical and spiritual existence not only against the nihilism of the east, rather in which we through the general technological and political development will come into increasingly close contact with the races of the far east, who possess such a lifedetermining center.

Do you believe in all seriousness, that among men of the twentieth century Christianity can still be this center? Even if one would come in order to interpret for us the teachings of Nazareth in a totally new, revolutionary sense, historical experience still speaks against a world-moving idea that has once lost its obligating effect on men winning it back. But why, may you ask, should it no longer suffice for us, that which was content of life for our fathers for almost 1000 years? To that the following explanation: The people of the German Middle Ages and yet to the middle of the nineteenth century were in their life attitude and peasant origin so non-falsified and close to nature that they could survive a world-rejecting, purely otherworldly religion without running the risk to lose the foundation of the natural world or to even seriously violate the life-laws of this world. However, when man started to increasingly change his life through technology and to distance himself from simple and clear nature in life style and origin, grew at the same time the compulsion and drive to in his faith again think of the eternal laws of earthly nature, to seek God in this world and to hence base his highest ethical values on the commandants of this world and not the beyond. This development seems to me to be a necessary reaction to the technology in our life, which in union with a purely other-worldly religion must lead to a complete loss of any natural bond and to a lethal misrecognition of natural values, on which we men are one way or other dependent.

But even if you do not agree with this line of thought, a question must be asked: "Are you yourself still a Christian?" A Christian in the sense that the salvation teachings of Golgotha, that charity as the sole supreme value, that the equality of all before God, that

these ideas, which actually mock the actual world order on earth, are for you the obligating center and driving force of your action? Is not precisely your work determined by completely different forces?

You can hardly deny that, at the latest in the classical period and to an increased extent in the romantic period, the work of even the church-oriented, pious artists drank from other springs than from those of Christian teachings. Like all works of our folk, it comes from a religiosity that stands beyond all denominations, comes from the divine fire of the incomparable German soul.

Was Christianity really the foundation of their wonderful creative strength? I believe that cause and affect are switched here. That what our Nordic soul has given to mankind could not have been placed in it by any ever so holy teaching. It was inborn from the start like any great talent. It proved its creative strength already millennia before Christ in culture-works that range from mankind's first plough among our Germanic ancestors to the Nordic pillars of the Parthenon and the Aryan wisdom of Old India. But like each creative talent, it requires a push, a vibration, which first makes it fully active. Christianity became a fertilizing force, its proclamation and its Germanization, but even very early the passionate conflict with an alien God became driving force and characteristic of German spiritual creativity and so became inseparable components of the German soul and German life itself.

But does the recognition of a spiritual condition and value also mean the acceptance of its immutability? That would mean to sentence the creative force to death, for its most essential trait is its ever rejuvenating fertility, is Goethe's "Die and become!" Indeed, everything that was, remains preserved forever, and a spiritual phase of development always remains a permanent possession.

German art began its journey home from the other-worldly regions of the orient when it became aware of the legacy of the spiritual ancestors of Greece in the classical period and when in the romantic period the most secret springs of their own folk-soul broke open in fables and songs. It was just the first presentiment long before the time, yet already proclamation of new life, for whom titans like Nietzsche cleared the way.

Is it then so old and used-up, the German soul, that it cannot, under the blows of fate, walk new paths, in order to become fertile from a new center and to so fulfill its divine task? Only if we answer no to this question, can we affirm our present and future, in short, our life. And if we do that, then we also do not want to and we cannot reject our own past as part of this life and everything from which our soul has become rich. We do not want to reject anything at all, not the cathedrals and not the altar images, not Luther and not the Matthew Passion. But also not the new paths, which lead to the future. All of them only represent steps of development and forms of expression of the one divine force, the German soul, in which the fire of Prometheus bums. Precisely this German soul now searches for a new faith, creates for itself a new obligating religious center. Perhaps it is today still more presentiment than form, and hence I cannot formulate it with universal validity, rather just affirm the basic characteristics, which glow to me personally from the mists of the beginning.

This, then, is its first statement, that God is of this world and that his commandments are the natural commandments of this life. That the researching intellect of men hence

simultaneously means the divine task to recognize the will of creation in its laws, which reveal themselves to human intellect. That we must therefore be victor in the struggle for existence in order to remain capable and worthy to carry the flame in our hearts that is the purest expression of the divine. That this divine flame, which distinguishes us from animals, is the eternal will for formation, for the creative deed, to the deed that in itself becomes proclamation of divine will.

And this is its second statement, that in the bodily as in the spiritual, confirmation only grows out of struggle, perfection only out of victory, life only from death. Sacrifice is the purest expression of this basic law of all life.

And this is its third statement, that all life is eternal. For we today know the law of the preservation of energy which knows no passing, rather only transformation. So do we presume the law of the preservation of physical life in itself, which likewise presents itself to us in an eternal process of transformation, most beautifully and insightfully in the genetic rivers of our own blood, that is simultaneously the bearer of all our spiritual traits. And therefore I also believe in the immortality of everything spiritual that, conceived by the flame of our hearts, has made the world rich and man the proclaimer of the divine. For spirit is at the same time energy and life.

I believe that thoughts and deeds are eternal and that God's visibility in this world depends on their perpetuating number, energy and purity. So, too, can the evil, that means the part that contradicts the God-given life-laws, never be atoned through the individual's regret or by sacrifice of life to God, rather only through an appropriate, morally good deed. A man's sole salvation lies in the moral deed. Whether he or others perform them, is meaningless for the eternity of life, but that the saving and elevating deed is performed at all, that decides over existence and growth of the divine in the world and is the moral call that goes out to each one of us.

Here, too, lies the religious justification for folk-life as the highest value, for it is the unconditional prerequisite for the rise of men who are capable of the moral deed.

So I believe in the great unity of body, soul and mind, in active life and religious task, in passing world and eternal God, in that lofty harmony that enabled the Greeks their God-proclaiming deeds, in that harmony whose consciousness was lost under the influence of Christianity, but nonetheless deeply remained the fertile secret of German creative energy and that, once won back, will enable the German soul its loftiest expression.